

REMARKS

Applicants request favorable reconsideration of this application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks. Of claims 1-18 that were pending in the application, claims 1, 2, 4-7, 9, 10, 12-14, 16, and 17 were rejected in the Office Action and claim 18 remains withdrawn from consideration. By way of this amendment, Applicants have: (a) amended claims 1, 2, 6, 7, 10, 13, and 14; and (b) canceled claims 3-5, 8, 11, 12, and 15-17. Accordingly, claims 1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, and 14 are respectfully presented for further consideration.

Applicants appreciate the positive indication of allowable subject matter in claims 3, 8, 11, and 15. In response to this positive indication, independent claims 1, 6, and 13 have been amended to recite the limitations of claims 3, 8, and 15, respectively (and claims 3, 8, and 15 were correspondingly canceled). Accordingly, claims 1, 6, and 13 should be in condition for allowance. Moreover, as claim 2 depends from claim 1, as claims 7, 9, and 10 depend from claim 6, and as claim 14 depends from claim 13, each of these dependent claims also should be in condition for allowance.

Claim Rejections

The Examiner rejected: (a) claims 1, 4, 13, and 16 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,568,499 ("Nakazawa"); and (b) claims 2, 5-7, 9, 10, 12, 14, and 17 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being obvious when considering Nakazawa in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,298,941 ("Spadafora"). Preliminarily, these rejections are now moot with respect to claims 4, 5, 12, 16, and 17, which have been canceled herein, without prejudice or disclaimer. Accordingly, these rejections will be addressed and respectfully traversed with respect to claims 1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, and 14.

Without acquiescing to the propriety of these rejections, Applicants respectfully submit that each of these rejections is now moot with respect to independent claims 1, 6, and 13, which were amended herein to include the allowable limitations of claims 3, 8, and 15, respectively, thereby rendering claims 1, 6, and 13 allowable over Nakazawa and Spadafora. Moreover, as claim 2 depends from claim 1, as claims 7, 9, and 10 depend from claim 6, and as claim 14 depends from claim 13, each of these dependent claims is also allowable over Nakazawa and Spadafora, without regard to the other patentable limitations recited therein. Accordingly, a withdrawal of the rejections of claims 1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, and 14 is both warranted and earnestly solicited.

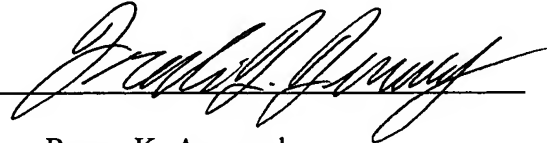
CONCLUSION

For the aforementioned reasons, claims 1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, and 14 are now in condition for allowance. A Notice of Allowance at an early date is respectfully requested. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned if such communication would expedite the prosecution of the application.

Respectfully submitted,

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THE COMMISSIONER IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO CHARGE ANY ADDITIONAL FEES WHICH MAY BE REQUIRED REGARDING THIS APPLICATION UNDER 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, OR CREDIT ANY OVERPAYMENT, TO DEPOSIT ACCOUNT NO. 19-0741. SHOULD NO PROPER PAYMENT BE ENCLOSED HERewith, AS BY A CHECK BEING IN THE WRONG AMOUNT, UNSIGNED, POST-DATED, OTHERWISE IMPROPER OR INFORMAL OR EVEN ENTIRELY MISSING, THE COMMISSIONER IS AUTHORIZED TO CHARGE THE UNPAID AMOUNT TO DEPOSIT ACCOUNT NO. 19-0741. IF ANY EXTENSIONS OF TIME ARE NEEDED FOR TIMELY ACCEPTANCE OF PAPERS SUBMITTED HERewith, APPLICANT HEREBY PETITIONS FOR SUCH EXTENSION UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 AND AUTHORIZES PAYMENT OF ANY SUCH EXTENSIONS FEES TO DEPOSIT ACCOUNT NO. 19-0741.